

Message Text

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44

ACTION NEA-16

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BEIRUT FOR AMBASSADOR STOLTZFUS

EO 11652: NA

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SUBJ: VISA FACILITY FOR KUWAITI NATIONALS

REF: A) KUWAIT 1168, B) STATE 67176

SUMMARY: GOK FONMIN OFFICIAL HAS INFORMALLY INDICATED TO US THAT GOK MAY INSTITUTE WAITING PERIOD FOR AMERICAN APPLICANTS FOR KUWAITI VISAS IF WE UNABLE EXPEDITE ISSUANCE VISAS FOR KUWAITIS. HE POINTED OUT CLEAR DISTINCTION BETWEEN KUWAITIS AND OTHER ARAB NATIONALS HERE AND OUR INFORMATION SUPPORTS PROPOSITION THAT KUWAITI NATIONALS CONSTITUTE NO RPT NO SIGNIFICANT SECURITY PROBLEM FOR USG. UNNECESSARY VISA DELAYS ON BOTH SIDES ARE OUT OF CHARACTER WITH IMPROVING US-ARAB RELATIONS IN GENERAL AND CONSTITUTE A REAL HINDRANCE TO OUR EXTENSIVE EFFORTS AT PROMOTING BUSINESS, FINANCIAL, AND OTHER COOPERATION WITH KUWAIT. WE URGE DEPARTMENT RECONSIDER REFUSAL OUR EARLIER REQUEST FOR EXCEPTION TO BOULDER EXPEDITE.END SUMMARY

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF ON JUNE 20, JASSEM BAHMAN, DIRECTOR
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OF CONSULAR AFFAIRS IN FONMINISTRY, STRONGLY IMPLIED HE WOULD SOON

BE COMPELLED TO INITIATE WAITING PERIOD BEFORE ISSUANCE KUWAIT VISAS TO AMERICAN APPLICANTS. HE STATED HE UNDER INCREASINGLY HEAVY PRESSURE FROM HIGHER UP IN FONMINISTRY, FROM OTHER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, AND FROM KUWAIT BUSINESS SECTOR TO RETALIATE FOR US VISA DELAYS. KUWAITIS HIGH AND LOW BARRAGE HIM WITH CALLS AND COMPLAINTS BECAUSE THEY CANNOT RECEIVE A VISA FROM AMEMBASSY ON TIMELY BASIS. HE SAID THAT FOR TWO MONTHS HE HAS BEEN SITTING ON COMPLAINT FROM MININTERIOR, WANTING TO KNOW WHY KUWAITIS MUST WAIT TO RECEIVE US VISAS WHILE AMERICANS DO NOT HAVE TO WAIT.

2. BAHMAN SUGGESTED THAT SIMILAR MEASURES HAVE ALREADY BEEN INITIATED IN CASES OF SWEDEN, DENMARK AND WEST GERMANY. SWEDES, FOR EXAMPLE, ARE SUBJECT TO AUTOMATIC 15-DAY WAITING PERIOD UPON APPLICATION FOR VISA. HE RELUCTANT TO ORDER GO-SLOW DIRECTIVES FOR AMERICAN APPLICANTS, ESPECIALLY IN ATMOSPHERE OF IMPROVING US-ARAB RELATIONS. SUCH STEPS WOULD BE UNFORTUNATE, BUT ARE LIKELY UNLESS US PROCEDURES CAN BE RELAXED.

3. WITHOUT ANY SUGGESTION FROM EMBOFF, BAHMAN SYMPATHIZED WITH US NEED FOR SECURITY MEASURES. HE LINKED THEIR INITIATION WITH MUNICH OLYMPICS INCIDENT, BUT SAID HE HAD EXPECTED THAT STRINGENCY OF VISA PROCEDURES WOULD BE EASED AFTER SUITABLE PERIOD. HE TOOK PAINS TO DISTINGUISH ABSOLUTELY BETWEEN TERRORISTS AND KUWAITIS. HE POINTED OUT THAT MAJORITY OF KUWAITIS WHO TRAVEL TO US ARE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED STUDENTS, OR BONA FIDE BUSINESSMEN. HE UNDERLINED FACT THAT BEARERS OF KUWAITI PASSPORTS VERY DIFFERENT FROM PALESTINIANS, IRAQIS, SYRIANS, AND BEARERS OF JORDANIAN PASSPORTS. HE SAID THAT RIGHT TO KUWAITI PASSPORT ZEALOUSLY GUARDED AND PASSPORT WITHDRAWN BY GOVERNMENT FROM ANY KUWAITI WHO CAUSES DISTURBANCES WHILE ABROAD. BAHMAN SUGGESTED IT WOULD BE EASY FOR US TO VERIFY THAT KUWAITIS HAVE NOT BEEN ENGAGED IN TROUBLE-MAKING IN US, AS MANY HAVE BEEN GOING THERE FOR YEARS WITHOUT MAKING PROBLEMS. BAHMAN EXPRESSED HOPE THAT VISA-ISSUING TIME MIGHT BE REDUCED TO 48 HOURS FOR KUWAITIS. HE IMPLIED THAT NEW MEASURES FOR AMERICAN APPLICANTS FOR KUWAITI VISAS COULD GO INTO EFFECT IN MONTH OR SO UNLESS OUR PROCEDURES RELAXED.

4. COMMENT: OF 1177 VISAS ISSUED TO KUWAITIS THUS FAR IN FY 74, THERE HAVE BEEN 818 A-2, 210 B-2, AND 87 B-1. MAJORITY OF A-2 LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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VISAS HAVE BEEN ISSUED TO GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED STUDENTS, BUT SIGNIFICANT NUMBER HAVE GONE TO GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS TRAVELING ON TDY OFFICIAL BASIS. NOT ONE OF 1177 BOULDER CABLES SENT FOR THESE KUWAITIS HAS RESULTED IN VISA REFUSAL OR IN USEFUL DEROGATORY INFO. IN FACT, CONOFF REMEMBERS ONLY TWO KUWAITI BOULDER CASES: ONE TURNED OUT TO BE MISTAKEN IDENTITY, SECOND REPORTED POLICIAL ACTIVITY BY KUWAITI IN IRAQ IN 1959. WHEN MEASURED AGAINST LARGE COSTS OF INCONVENIENCE TO TRAVELING KUWAITIS AND ILL-WILL

REGULARLY GENERATED BY BOULDER DELAY, THESE TWO CASES SEEM
PITIABLY SMALL BENEFIT.

5. BAHMAN, WHO EXPECTS REMAIN AS DIRECTOR OF CONSULAR AFFAIRS
FOR TWO YEARS MORE, HAS WITHOUT FAIL BEEN HELPFUL TO CONOFFS WHEN
KUWAITI PROCEDURES WOULD HAVE PREVENTED ENTRY TO US
CITIZENS ARRIVING WITH EXPIRED VISAS OR INDEED WITH NO VISAS.
ACCORDING TO HIM, HE HAS PERSONALLY AUTHORIZED KUWAITI CONSULS
TO ISSUE VISAS TO AMERICANS VALID FOR SIX MONTHS IF NEED BE,
WHICH IS PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT WHEN COMPARED TO THAT ACCORDED
OTHER NON-ARABS.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: THAT DEPARTMENT REVIEW BOULDER REQUIREMENT
FOR KUWAITI NATIONALS TAKING INTO ACCOUNT POINTS MADE BY BAHMAN,
WHICH WE FULLY ENDORSE. THERE IS CLEAR DISTINCTION TO BE MADE
IN FAVOR OF KUWAITI NATIONALS OVER OTHER ARABS IN GENERAL.
KUWAITIS REQUIRE NO RPT NO VISAS TO UK. CONTINUATION OF OUR
REQUIREMENTS WILL DEFINITELY HINDER OUR GROWING BUSINESS, FINANCIAL
AND OTHER COOPERATION WITH KUWAIT. PLEASE ADVISE.
MCCLELLAND

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